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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000562

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: GOK DOWNPLAYS MP POSTURING, REITERATES SUPPORT FOR  
EXISTING CHAPTER 7 FRAMEWORK

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and  
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Summary  
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¶1. (U) Kuwait issued a calculated response on Wednesday to Kuwaiti and Iraqi parliamentarians' inflammatory press statements concerning settlement of disputes stemming from Iraq's 1990 invasion of its southern neighbor. The Amir called for MPs to be patient, and the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq, Ali al-Mou'min, told emboffs in Baghdad that he is not being recalled. MFA U/S Khaled al-Jarallah told local press on Tuesday night that the unresolved issues in the bilateral relationship should not be escalated in the media and instead should be addressed through diplomatic channels. Some National Assembly members earlier in the day demanded Kuwait sever diplomatic ties in response to Iraqi statements calling for a halt to reparation payments and demanding compensation for allowing Operation Iraqi Freedom to be launched from Kuwaiti territory. The GOK's non-escalation policy was echoed by UN Envoy to Iraq Steffan de Mistura who held prescheduled talks with Assembly Speaker Jassem al-Khorafi and FM Dr. Mohammad al-Sabah. The newly elected chair of the Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, Marzouq al-Ghanim, and Khorafi made public comments supporting the government's stance. Nonetheless, the Iraqi rhetoric has reminded Kuwaitis of their long-standing distrust of their northern neighbor and is likely to strengthen GOK resolve to resist any easing of Iraq's obligations under Chapter VII. End Summary

Grandstanding Drowned Out by More Reasonable Voices  
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¶2. (U) In response to Iraqi MPs "attacks" calling for an end to compensation payments, outspoken Kuwaiti Assembly members on Tuesday urged the government to recall its ambassador to Baghdad. Islamist provocateur Walid al-Tabtabaei joined independent Islamist Falah al-Sawwagh and Azmi tribal representative Ghanim al-Mai in angrily rebuffing the Iraqi statements. Their prickly rhetoric, however was overshadowed by the government's more even tone and a majority of the Assembly members who made public comments called for an end to the incendiary statements, strengthening of relations between the countries, and peaceful settlement of the outstanding disputes.

¶3. (U) The government and parliament appear keen to present a united front. Kuwaiti dailies on Thursday reported the Amir sent a message to MPs urging them to be patient regarding the situation with Iraq. MFA U/S Jarallah, in comments to Kuwaiti press Tuesday night, said that he regretted the statements of the Iraqi MPs and that Kuwait supports Iraq's desire to exit from Chapter VII, but only after its international obligations to Kuwait have been settled. His sentiments were reiterated by Khorafi who issued

a statement stressing the significance of resolving the spat through an official framework and expressing hope for settlement and maintenance of the rights of all parties pursuant to the relevant Security Council Resolutions. Khorafi held a prescheduled meeting with the UN Special Envoy to Iraq de Mistura on Wednesday, who called for the Speaker to use his authority to calm lawmakers.

¶4. (U) Chairman al-Ghanim announced that Foreign Minister Mohammad al-Sabah will attend the Foreign Affairs Committee's meeting on Sunday to discuss relations with Iraq and urged Assembly members to exercise restraint and to speak wisely. Ambassador Mou'min plans to join the MFA for the session, but will return to Baghdad shortly afterword and delay his planned summer holiday at least another month, lest his action be misinterpreted as a "withdrawal" from Iraq.

Comment: Kuwaiti Fears Reinforced

¶5. (C) Many Kuwaitis assume that Iraq will eventually reemerge as a threat to their sovereignty. Grandstanding by Iraqi MPs compounds the distrust caused by Iraq's failure to name an ambassador, non-settlement of Gulf War-era disputes, and encroachment into Kuwait by Iraqi farmers. The GOK is unlikely to make any rash moves, such as recalling al-Mou'min, and probably hopes that its diplomatic tone will bolster its argument to uphold Iraq's Chapter VII obligations at the UN. End Comment.

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